



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 114th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 162

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2016

No. 134

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. VALADAO).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

September 7, 2016.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVID G. VALADAO to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 5, 2016, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour, and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, to understand what is wrong with American politics, especially the dysfunctional Republican House of Representatives, look no further than the spectacle surrounding the IRS and the impeachment of its Commissioner.

The Internal Revenue Service impacts 150 million American taxpayers every year, virtually every family and all legal businesses. This is how we fi-

nance essential services, from Social Security to medical research, our national defense, national parks, veterans' services, and so much more. Everything that matters to Americans depends on the ability to finance government efficiently and fairly.

Look, Americans from the dawn of the Republic have chafed at paying taxes, continuing a tradition that dates back to Biblical times, and almost everybody says they hate the IRS, which is the cheapest, quickest political applause line for any politician. Yet, over the years, we have managed to collect money that allows us to win wars, struggle through depressions, and provide what used to be some of the finest public services on the face of the planet.

Yes, the Internal Revenue Service administers a hopelessly complex, convoluted, and unfair Tax Code because that is what the American Congress has given them to work with. Congress created this mess and then blames the people who try to administer it.

If we are ever to make the IRS better, more efficient, and fairer, it is going to require a degree of cooperation, candor, and hard work. The current spectacle of destroying the reputation of a distinguished public servant, an accomplished businessman, is going to make that task even harder.

Make no mistake. The treatment of John Koskinen, with the possibility of being the first Cabinet official impeached in nearly 140 years, is not just embarrassing for the people who are perpetrating it; it represents a threat to the ability to administer the IRS.

John Koskinen came to this position after a lifetime of success in business as a turnaround expert at the highest levels as well as in public service, holding senior positions in both Republican and Democratic administrations. The Bush administration turned to him to prevent the implosion of the housing finance giant, Freddie Mac, and he spent 3 years guiding and rebuilding it.

There is absolutely no evidence that he did anything wrong. The Republican inspector general, a former Republican staff member, found nothing wrong. This impeachment action is going nowhere in the Senate. It has got to be an embarrassment for the Speaker, committee chairmen, and Republicans everywhere. It only serves to highlight ideological divisions, lack of respect for due process, and the exaggerated power of the Republican echo chamber of rightwing talk radio.

But it does more than add to disdain for the political process. It is a cloud over public service. While people claim we don't need the IRS or that our tax filing can be reduced to a postcard and that we can generate all the money we need with reduced tax rates and more exemptions, it is a fantasy that any responsible Republican businessperson or independent economist will verify.

Going down this impeachment path will make it harder to recruit somebody for the hardest job in government and will only deepen the divides at a time when we need clear thinking and nonpartisan cooperation to fix a broken IRS, establish the trust and hard work to make the mechanics of revenue collection work, and avoid the breakdown of the system.

This is playing with fire and should be beneath America's elected officials. Tarnishing the stellar reputation of an outstanding citizen who is doing his country a favor by volunteering to take this thankless task is simply something that should not be tolerated.

THE TIME FOR WAITING IS OVER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this is Suicide Prevention Month, and we have a lot of work to do.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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